

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

in Memory of the Gypsy Victims of Nazi Genocide



1980
United States
Holocaust Memorial Council

September 16, 1986

Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C.

**Sponsored by the United States Holocaust Memorial Council
In Association with the American Rom Community**

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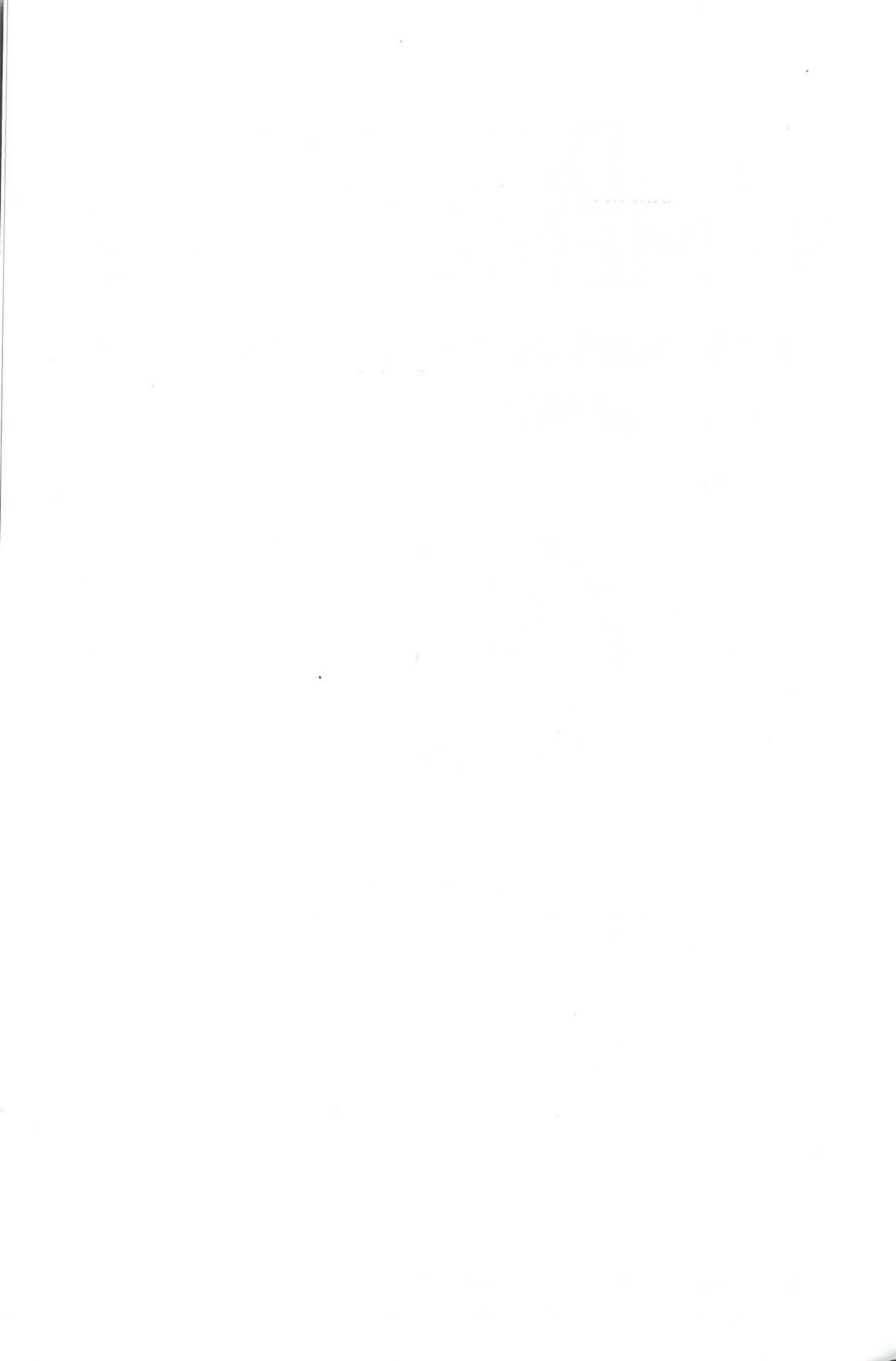


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U.S. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL COUNCIL

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, established in 1980 by a unanimous vote of Congress, represents the commitment of the American people and the government of the United States to remember the darkest chapter in human history—the Holocaust.

The Council was charged with the responsibility of fostering remembrance in two important ways: through the annual civic commemoration of Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust; and by planning, raising funds for, and constructing the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

At the core of the museum will be the Hall of Remembrance—a national memorial to those murdered in the Holocaust. The permanent exhibit of the museum will tell the full story of the Holocaust, from inception to implementation of the “Final Solution,” and the accomplishments of Holocaust survivors. The memorial museum is designed to inform, touch, inspire and irrevocably change all who feel its influence.

The memorial museum will be built on federal land near the Mall in Washington, D.C., in sight of the Washington Monument and Jefferson Memorial. It will be located between 14th and 15th Streets, S.W. on the block that runs between Independence Avenue and the Tidal Basin.

By law, all funds necessary to construct the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum must be contributed by private sources. A Campaign to Remember was established to raise the necessary funds—\$ 100 million. President Ronald Reagan is Honorary Chairman of the Campaign.

The Council consists of 55 members of various faiths and backgrounds appointed by the President, plus five U.S. Senators and five members of the House of Representatives.

The Council has undertaken a number of activities to broaden public understanding of the Holocaust, to encourage preservation of documentation, and to expand scholarship and teaching about the Holocaust, including:

- Special conferences dealing with topics such as liberators of the camps (1981), rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust

(1984), and non-Jews persecuted and murdered by the Nazis (1987).

- Film productions, such as *The Courage to Care, To Bear Witness*, and *Riga: A Tale of Two Ghettos*.
- Educational resources, such as the *Directory of Holocaust Centers and Organizations*.
- Archival activities, such as the National Archives documentation and preservation program and the prototype of the automated inventory system.

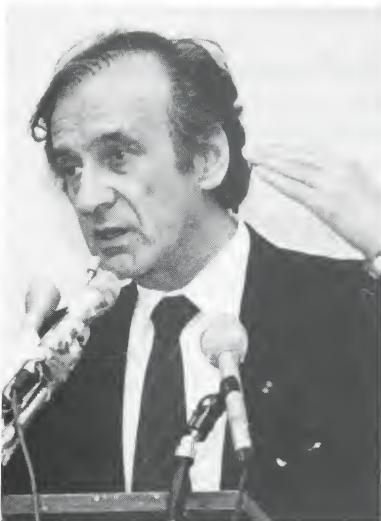


INVOCATION

Rev. John T. Pawlikowski
Member
U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council

Lord God, Eternal Parent to us all. We remember our Romani brothers and sisters who died alongside the supreme victims, the Jews, together with the Poles, Ukrainians, Gay people and others because they became expendable in the perverted Nazi

plan to remake humanity. We pray that God will grant the Rom community strength and full justice today. May we never fall into that dark Nazi pit ourselves, no not even a little bit, by allowing labels, titles, distinctiveness or infirmity to obscure the basic equality of all human persons, the result of your creative spirit and life dwelling within them. May we continue to honor the memory of the Romani victims—for remembering is our only way of resisting what happened during the years of night and of guaranteeing that death will not again reign supreme in our time. Amen.



COMMEMORATIVE ADDRESS

**The Honorable Elie Wiesel
Chairman
U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council**

Today is a special day for all of us. Not only to members of the Gypsy community whose voice we have not heard, but it is a special day for all of us who try to bring people together in the name of humanity.

I confess that I feel somewhat

guilty towards our Romani friends. We have not done enough to listen to your voice of anguish. We have not done enough to make other people listen to your voice of sadness. Your suffering too must be recorded. Your agony and the agony of your friends, of your parents, of your grandparents must be remembered. If not, the story would not be a true story. The survivors in your midst also deserve much more than what they get. Specifically, I appeal here to the government of the West German Republic to consider your survivors as the heirs of the victims and therefore eligible to get compensation. You deserve compensation from Germany just as other victims have received compensation.

Furthermore, the time has come to put an end to the suspicion, to the discrimination, to the persecution of Gypsies in so many parts of the world. As we gather here to remember, it is surely in the hope not only of keeping the memory of the past alive, but also to repair the present and to redeem the future.

I said I feel guilty towards you because I remember. I remember what happened on the night of the Gypsies. Some of us were there and that night will remain with me as long as I live—when throughout the Kingdom of Night, tongues of fire ran through from man to man, from child to child, from the child in man to the old man in man. We heard simply one rumor, “They are burning the Gypsies,” and the cries, the tears, the yelling, and the pleading. No, no one should forget that night.

I can promise you on my behalf, and on behalf of my friends, that we shall do whatever we can from now on to listen better. Of course, I, as a Jew, am concerned mainly with the tragedy of my

people; for after all, what happened then was meant to destroy the entire Jewish people. But to have suffered, means to be sensitive to other people's suffering and that suffering taught us sensitivity. Therefore, we must be sensitive to you, to your memory, and include the parts of the agony which was yours, in the entire tale which cannot be told, but must be told.

Just as when I, as a Jew, speak of Jewish suffering I refer to the universal condition of suffering in man, to the inhumanity that prevails. You too, when you will speak, should try to address yourselves to the suffering of humanity in general. That is no contradiction. In particularism lies the universality. The more particular the message, the more universal it is and one should not deny the other. And so it is perhaps fitting that I, profoundly Jewish, am so sensitive to what you feel and to what you remember.

On behalf of my friends on the Council, I can promise that there will be from now on the heightened degree of awareness and sensitivity to what you represent, to what you carry in yourselves and to what you are.

REMARKS



**Dr. Harry James Cargas, Director
Church Outreach Programs
U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council**

It is an honor to be here today, but it is not a pleasure. The circumstances which bring us together do not permit pleasure. In commemorating the dead, we can find no joy. In remembering the deaths of human beings at the hands of other human beings,

we can only come together in sadness. But this remembering is surely an obligation we have to those who were starved, beaten, tortured, humiliated, and murdered.

In our century, unhappily, people of various backgrounds are linked together in a most bizarre way. Armenians, Jews, Gypsies and Cambodians—people who ordinarily would have little to unite them—are joined in a common bond: that of genocide. Today we come together to honor the victims of one of these groups, the Gypsies.

A distinguished scholar, Max Brod, made an important distinction between what he labeled as noble suffering and ignoble suffering. Noble suffering, Mr. Brod wrote, is that which human beings experience because they have no control over such events. Earthquakes, hurricanes, floods and tornados are examples.

Ignoble suffering, however, is that which men, women and children undergo even though other human beings could have prevented such tragedy. Wars are avoidable. The children in Ethiopia who are starving today would not be in such a condition if the world community put its mind to eradicate hunger in Africa.

The fate of the Gypsies at the hands of the Nazis—and others—was an ignoble fate, a disaster which could have been avoided. We would not be here today if enough human beings took their humanity responsibly. We should not be here today.

The tragedy of the Gypsies is, we must acknowledge, an ongoing history, not one limited to our era alone. Large massacres of Gypsies took place in the ninth century, the 14th

century and earlier in the 20th century, all before the Nazi slaughter. Gypsies were branded as liars when, in fact, the lies were told about them; lies about criminality, asociality, cannibalism, and even assistance at the crucifixion of Jesus.

Gypsies were abused by the church, by the state, and by trade unions. As late as the 19th century in Denmark, there were Gypsy hunts, akin to fox hunts. Gypsies were made sport of. I do not have to recite this list of atrocities for the Gypsies in this room. I tell them for the rest of us. Because this is an occasion which is dedicated to remembrance, let us recall not only the dead of World War II, but the events, practices and beliefs which led up to what happened in that war.

We should not stop with that war, however. It has recently been revealed that up to 1973, in a nation as apparently enlightened as Switzerland, Gypsy children were taken from their parents in a governmental program called “Operation Children of the Road.”

The foregoing summary is totally inadequate. This morning we limit our focus to those Gypsy people who were annihilated from 1939 to 1945. Terrible words come to mind: Hitler, sterilization, torture, Himmler, Dachau, murder, Mengele, racism, Auschwitz, deportation, Einsatzgruppen.

There are other words also. Words which we can often associate with good: words like “law” and “church.” But even “law” becomes a vile term when we realize that anti-Gypsy laws were passed, and “church” becomes a parody when we remember that church officials in certain areas persecuted the Gypsies so rapidly that even the Nazi soldiers in those places were appalled by what they were witnessing.

In *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*, Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon estimated in 1972 that nearly a quarter of a million Gypsies were murdered in World War II. Later figures, based on new research, put the number at nearly double this figure, close to half a million. Whatever the sum is, the sum is enormous.

And then there are the other facts of which we non-Gypsies must be made aware. At the Nuremberg War Trials, which established new and important precedents in legal history and political and military responsibility, not a single Gypsy was invited to testify. And when Gypsies sought reparations for the deprivations, the initial claims of *proven* victims were rejected.

The tragedy of the Gypsies during that war is basically unknown. The United States Holocaust Memorial Council is committed to helping make the story known. The Council is committed to the proposition of remembrance of all victims of

the massive atrocities of World War II.

There's a Gypsy song which illustrates the horror of the concentration camps:

In that camp,
Oh they work hard,
They work hard and get beaten.
Do not hit me, do not beat me,
Or you will kill me.
I have children at home.
Who will bring them up?

We grieve for the singer of that song, for the singer's children. We grieve for the hundreds of thousands of Gypsies dead and we grieve for the families that might have been.

As we remember the dead and their past, let us dedicate ourselves to the living and their future. We owe that to the Gypsy victims we honor today.



REMARKS

**The Honorable Richard Krieger
Executive Director
U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council**

It has been less than half a century since the Rom and other innocent victims endured unspeakable suffering at the hands of the Nazis in a deliberate and often uncontested genocide.

No event in modern history approaches the barbarism of the

Nazi concentration camps. The camps represented a horror almost beyond comprehension. And yet it was an act of atrocity by human beings against other human beings.

It is the way of human nature to block such horrors from our consciousness, to bury them beneath our memory, to convince ourselves that they are apparitions and couldn't happen here or anywhere else.

We must make people think and remember and understand how narrow is the separation between civilization and barbarism. Between the precious rights we take for granted and the monstrous wrongs of which man is capable. By remembering, we strengthen our conviction never again to stand silent when tyrants call for the subordination of freedom and justice to slavery and persecution.

By remembering we gain wisdom, for the Nazi genocide stands testament to man's moral imperfections. Unfortunately, the capacity for evil did not die in the bunker with Adolph Hitler. The evidence is all around us. There are things going on in the world today which if not confronted squarely and defeated can mushroom to wholesale threats to the foundation of our morality and our civilization.

Whether the issue is state sponsored terrorism or genocide, the legacy of the death camps admonishes us all to stand up and fight back and, above all, never to acquiesce to the horror of innocent people being destroyed by indiscriminate bombing and political starvation.

I ask you to join in pledging to insure that we never forget

the lessons of World War II and that the tragedy that befell the Rom people during that bloody epoch of history never be wiped from our minds.

The American philosopher, George Santayana, has warned that those who forget the errors of history are condemned to repeat them.

The Nazi regime reveals the potential pathology at the heart of the Western civilization and the frightening consequences of the total exercise of power. Remembering can instill caution, fortify restraint, and protect against future evil or indifference.

In order to insure that we remember the lessons of World War II, a national memorial is being built in Washington, D.C., the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, to honor all the innocent victims of Nazi genocide. Planning for the design and content of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum is underway at this very moment. It is our hope that the symbolism of this Memorial and other monuments will hold lessons for us.

Unless we are inspired to remember the past and to link it with the present and the future, those lessons, will be lost. Unless they motivate us to dedicate ourselves to fighting prejudice, hatred and unjust causes wherever and whenever they should arise, these monuments will be meaningless.

It is our obligation today and every day to honor the Rom victims by insuring that the human race will never again forget its humanity and that our obligation, above all else, is to assure that never again will people, through indifference, become unconcerned collaborators in a senseless slaughter and destruction of human beings.



REMARKS

**The Honorable Sigmund Strochlitz
Chairman, Days of Remembrance
Committee
U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council**

On behalf of the Days of Remembrance Committee, welcome to this commemoration remembering the fate of the Gypsy communities in Nazi Europe.

The Zigeuner-Lager, the Gypsy camp, was next to the one my transport was brought to, in Sep-

tember of 1943. On arrival we saw the chimneys vomiting clouds of human flesh. We were told by the older inmates that that is what would be left of our families that we had just been separated from. We couldn't believe it and clung for a while to illusions—mostly because next to the chimneys we noticed a camp where families were living together, playing together, working together. This was the Gypsy camp.

Only several weeks later did we realize that we were hoping against hope and that the older inmates had not misled us. Our families had been killed. At that point we couldn't help but look with amazement at the Gypsy camp, believing that their fate will be different from ours, that their families will survive the Nazi onslaught. There were even feelings of envy. Those feelings did not last too long.

We and the inmates of the Gypsy camp realized that we were brought to a universe willed and dominated by death. And that here in that kingdom of night, where the 55 men had taken on all the attributes of God, acting as the angels of death, our chances of survival were very, very slim. Some of us were dying daily of hunger and disease while others were taken to the gas chambers during frequent "selections." After a while it became clear that the Gypsy families were kept alive only to facilitate terrible, gruesome medical experiments.

The Gypsy love of music was a source of consolation to all of us. I remember so well coming close to the barbed electrical wires that separated the two camps to listen to their haunting songs and the rhythmic, but sad music. They even encouraged

their children to dance, hoping to dispel the feelings of gloom and perhaps give the children a sense of hope.

Some of the younger Gypsies, and this I remember very well, tried to escape, but were recaptured and either shot or hanged in the presence of their families. The end to the Gypsy camp came in the fall of 1944. I don't remember the exact date, but the days were already shorter, the nights cooler. We sensed that the war was coming to an end. There were even rumors that the Russian Army was not too far away.

Then one day, walking through the gates to our miserable assignments, I saw a young Gypsy woman and others being taken away. They cried bitterly. They understood that they were being taken away to die. During that day and the following night, the Nazi murderers gassed the entire population of the Gypsy camp. In the morning there was no more music, no more dancing, no more songs. Just stinking smoke in the air and total silence.

I would like to conclude with a story reported by Sarah Nomberg Przytyk in her book, *True Tales From a Grotesque Land*:

We were sitting in a little room in the infirmary when Marusia yelled "achtung". We jumped up and ran inside. We were standing at attention when Mengele, the Angel of Death, walked in with a little Gypsy boy who may have been four years old. The little boy was a beauty. He was dressed in a white uniform consisting of long pants, a jacket with gold buttons and tie. We stared as if bewitched.

It was clear that Mengele was pleased to see us enchanted. He placed a chair in the middle of the infirmary and set down in it keeping the little Gypsy squeezed between his knees. The little boy understood German: "Show them how you dance the "Kozak." The little one kicked up his heels while maintaining a sitting position. He was astonishing.

"Now sing a song." The little one sang a haunting Gypsy melody and Mengele hugged him and kissed him. "That is beautiful," he said. "Here is something for the performance," taking a box of chocolate out of his pocket. They left.

We looked at each other not understanding why Mengele brought the boy to us. "I am sure that Mengele will kill him soon" Marusia said. We felt a cold chill.

The whole summer Mengele paraded around the camp with the little Gypsy who was always dressed in white.

Even when the selections took place, the little boy dressed in white stood at his side.

It is peculiar that throughout the whole slaughter in the fall of 1944 we could think of only one. Was Mengele going to protect the beautiful boy from gas?

The next day Mengele paraded through the camp without the little boy. The men told us that at the last minute Mengele had pushed the little boy in the gas chambers with his own hands.

I remember that little boy. How could I forget him.



REMARKS

The Honorable Tom Lantos U.S. House of Representatives

We are really here to do three things: We are here to remember, we are here to pay tribute, and we are here to promise.

We are here—much too late—to remember the Romani genocide. We are here to remember, because failing to remember

would give the Hitlers and the Mengeles of this world yet another triumph. They killed them and we must not allow them to kill their memories, so we are here to remember.

I am also here to pay tribute because Romanies have played an important and integral part in my life since my earliest childhood. I remember vividly as a little boy the untold joy, excitement and happiness that Romanies brought to me, to my family, to millions. I shall never forget watching a little Romani boy being taught by his father to play the violin, and I can't begin to recall the occasions in Budapest when my parents took me to listen to the Romanies' brilliant and effervescent music and dance.

I could never understand as a little boy why they suffered persecution, discrimination and denigration when, in fact, they brought us all this joy and love of life.

They are still bringing us happiness and beauty. Two weeks ago in San Francisco, my wife and I attended a performance of Spain's most outstanding flamenco dance troupe. It was all Romani. And it was full of artistry and humanity and excitement and dynamism. It was truly one of the greatest artistic experiences of our lives.

So I do not just want to remember the nightmare of our Romani brothers and sisters being tortured and killed. I want also to remember and pay tribute to them for all they have done to elevate our human spirit through the centuries.

To remember, to pay tribute and to promise. There is not much one can promise, but what little one can promise, one must. I shall initiate today a letter in the House of Representatives to the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany Helmut Kohl, and to his East German counterpart Secretary General Erich Honecker,

calling for Germany to make a significant and symbolic recognition of the nightmare that the Romanies had to endure during the Holocaust. I expect that our German friends will respond, and I anticipate that the results of this effort will bring to large numbers of young Romanies in Europe and elsewhere an opportunity to advance their education and to take their long overdue rightful place in a free society. Thus they can make their contribution to the whole community with their talent and vibrancy that is so typical of all of them.

To remember, to pay tribute and to promise.

The Congress of the United States is long overdue in making these moves. It is better late than never. We are here in brotherhood and sisterhood to tell all of you we appreciate you. We love you. We cherish you and we join hands with you, so that never again shall this inhumanity to any of our brothers and sisters be allowed to take place.



REMARKS

**The Honorable
James M. Montgomery
Senior Deputy Assistant Secretary
of State for Human Rights and
Humanitarian Affairs
U.S. Department of State**

I am honored. I am also awed. What can anyone say in the face of such tragedy and suffering. What can any of us say to bring some meaning to what happened to the Gypsies in Europe?

To answer this I looked to the seal of this Council and saw in its

motto perhaps the beginning of an answer. We see words that command us all: "For the dead and the living we must bear witness". Why must we bear witness? How does it relate to us the living? Does this command go beyond simply paying the decent respect that is due to thousands of people who died in vicious circumstances and whose suffering has not been fully acknowledged?

I believe it does go beyond this. Those flames that lit the sky above Auschwitz, the screams that pierced the night and tore the hearts of those who heard them have meaning for us, and how we do our public business, and how we use the political power the people have given us.

As we bear witness, we must avoid the temptation to think that what happened in the Holocaust is of no relevance to citizens of the United States in the 1980's. We cannot succumb to the temptation to say that these events were so monstrous, such a one-time departure from normal political behavior that they have no meaning for us—that they have nothing to tell us about ourselves, or our civilization, or the dangers we face. We cannot turn our backs—for what led to the ovens of southern Poland and the gully in Babi Yar are things that we all know and understand. Things that can be the normal part of how we do our public business.

As Germany moved toward its atrocities, what it was doing at the beginning must have seemed so scholarly, so scientific, so legal, so normal. After all, there were students writing Ph.D

dissertations on racial origins and purity. Respected universities published books and articles on the subject. The government had a think tank—The Research Center for Racial Hygiene and Biological Population Studies. There were even laws on the subject passed by the German Parliament. For instance, just fifty-one years ago yesterday the government promulgated the Nuremberg Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor. New terms entered the language: “a-social”, “work-shy”, “degeneracy”, “eugenics”.

To many normal people it just had to seem like good old-fashioned common-sense. Why shouldn't the German race be pure and strong? Everyone knew how Gypsies were. They were different. They kept apart. They wandered all over the country, they didn't work at regular jobs, they didn't look like us, talk like us—they were different. Everyone knew this, had known it for hundreds of years. Why shouldn't the government do something about it?

Well, the government did. It took its political power and tied it to scientific research and bureaucratic efficiency and came up with a program to solve the problem. This is something we can all understand, particularly those of us in politics, science or the government. This approach has given us many positive things. It's wiped out polio, yellow fever and diphtheria. It's educated millions. It put men on the moon.

But in Germany it went wrong. The political power was unbridled, the science unexamined and arrogant, the bureaucracy totally consumed by its own purposes—and thousands went screaming to their deaths. Why?

The lesson for us all is in the answer to that question. It's simple—the German people quit asking questions and democracy died. There was no one left to ask questions. The Nazis controlled the information and media. Once the government accepted their theories and began to act upon them, even the scientists couldn't ask questions. The momentum toward conformity was too great and, besides, too many careers were at stake. Without the constant astringent flow of skeptical questions and the healthy inconvenience of having to answer them, the political leadership could do as it pleased to millions of human beings. We saw again how the power of an unexamined idea, pursued to its logical conclusion by unchecked leaders, can stifle our impulses to look upon our fellows as human beings. Indeed, one of the accounts I read of the atrocities spoke of how the need to shoot thousands of people day after day was

beginning to “demoralize” the regular troops. The Nazis had to organize special units that could better stifle those inconvenient beckonings of pity. But they found the pitiless and the people died and died.

Because of that we’re here today. But we must think about tomorrow and we must pray that tomorrow will not bring us another Holocaust. But there is nothing automatic about this. It’s not forgone that another nation will not again slip into that pit. The Nazis took the positive aspects of our common experience and gave them a twist. Just a little one, but it all went wrong. Out of this comes a burden we must all accept. A burden that we must carry with us always. It is the dark knowledge that it can happen again. It’s the knowledge that we are all brothers in this experience, all of us, the Jews, the Germans, the Gypsies. It went wrong for the Germans, it can go wrong for others. The proof against this is a constantly active citizenry, with the tools to question and question again its political leadership and make it explain what it is doing.

Without this solvent of consistent skepticism, the Germans turned their back on their history and traditions. We saw that those same powers that gave us freedom from disease and brought us unheard of economic abundance, can also be made to sweep from the roads and forests of Europe an ancient people that found joy and fulfillment in the ways of their ancestors. And they took those people and beat them, imprisoned them, experimented on their helpless bodies, branded them, starved them and when they served their purposes no more, gassed them to death and burned them.

We must, indeed, bear witness. We owe it to the dead. We owe it to the living. We owe it to ourselves and our children.



REMARKS

**Professor Ian Hancock
Board of Advisers
U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council**

I was just a child when the Second World War ended. But I remember the bomb shelters, and the blackouts, and especially the sirens warning us of air attacks from the Continent. I remember the devastation those attacks left behind in London's east end; the

empty shells of the buildings remained long after the war.

I was one of the lucky ones: I was born in Britain, and survived. Relatives of mine in Hungary did not; by 1945, over half a million of our people in Europe had been slaughtered. Those of us born here and in Britain must thank God for our deliverance.

German prejudice against the Romani people dates from our very arrival in that part of Europe in the 15th century. The methodical persecution which eventually culminated in genocide began at the end of the last century, with the establishment of the Central Office for Fighting the Gypsy Nuisance in Munich, in 1899. There had already been a proposal at an earlier conference on what was called the "Gypsy Filth" to round up and put into detention centers all Gypsies in German controlled territories. By the 1920's, special police units had been created to keep the Romani population under constant surveillance; everywhere, Rom and Sinti were fingerprinted and photographed, and were not allowed to move about the land without special passes.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, he found anti-Romani laws already well entrenched, needing only refinement by the Nazis to turn what had been harassment and bigotry into the deadly tool of racism and murder. In that same year, the very first year of Nazi power, Rom and Sinti became victims of the German program to eradicate unwanted elements from their new society and a number of Gypsies were sterilized and sent to camps at Dachau, Dieselstrasse, Mahrzan and Vennhausen.

In 1935, the Nuremberg Law for the Protection of Blood and Honor made unions between Gypsies and non-Gypsies illegal on

racial grounds; a Gypsy was defined at that time as anyone having as little as one eighth Romani ancestry. Ironically, the less Romani blood a Gypsy had, the harsher was his treatment at the hands of the Germans.

In 1936, Interpol itself supported the persecution of our people by establishing the International Center for the Fight Against the Gypsy Menace, an office which was not officially disbanded until 1970.

A Nazi Party proclamation issued in 1938 stated that the Gypsy problem was categorically a matter of race, and was to be dealt with in that light. Johannes Behrend, speaking for the Party a year later, declared that "elimination without hesitation" was the only way to protect the Aryan people from racial contamination from Sinti and Rom. In that year, Gypsies began to be transported to concentration camps in Berlin and Poland. The same began to take place in the Baltic states, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, France, Italy and Balkans. Large-scale round-ups were everywhere in effect by 1943; by April that year, over 10,000 Sinti and Rom were incarcerated in Sachsenhausen for later extermination. In some parts of Europe, entire Romani populations were destroyed, such as the Layenge Rom in Estonia, who are now an extinct people. Elsewhere in Nazi-controlled areas of Europe, as many as 70 and 80 percent of the resident Romani populations were exterminated. On August 1, 1944, four thousand of our people were murdered at Auschwitz in just one night.

So complete was the Nazi destruction of the Romani people in Europe that few survived to tell the story. Still fewer non-Gypsies seemed even to care. After the war, no nation came forward to help the survivors, no attempt was made on the part of any government or philanthropic organization to help reorient them, no war crime reparation was forthcoming, no invitations extended to testify at any of the war crime tribunals.

Hitler's methods of dealing with his Gypsy Problem included at first banishment, then sterilization, and finally extermination. For the Romani people, the defeat of Nazism did not bring an end to any of these—at least as possible solutions in the minds of some European authorities. For example, in 1981, police systematically rounded up and expelled numbers of Rom throughout Poland, abandoning them at sea without the papers necessary for them to return; in 1976, a government proposal in Czechoslovakia recommended that the sterilization of its Romani population would be an act of "socialistic humanity"; in 1968, one British politician in a public broadcast called for the extermination of Gypsies in his country. Romani lawyers have reason to believe

that the fingerprints and photographs in the files of the Interpol office which was officially closed in 1970, are still being used by the police in Germany against the Rom. The contemporary state of our people remains very critical, and it is functions such as this Day of Remembrance that will bring to the larger community a better understanding of our situation.

The recognition here today by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council on the fate of the Rom in Hitler's Europe marks a turning point in our efforts to bring it to the attention of the nation and of the world. This is a very special day, not only for Romani Americans but for all Americans. With the completion of the Memorial Museum, the fuller story of the Holocaust, as it affected all of its victims, will be told. We are at the beginning of a close and cooperative working relationship with the Council, one dedicated to bringing this to fruition.

Today is a special occasion for another reason as well. For the first time in American history, representatives of the different branches of the Romani Nation have come together in one place: members of the Machvano, Kalderash, Lovari, Xaladitka and Romanichal populations are here in this room to honor jointly the memory of our dead. Let us hope that in the years ahead, our numbers at this annual ceremony will grow, and that through future Days of Remembrance and the Memorial Museum, the world will no longer remain ignorant of the fate of our people in the Holocaust.

MEMORIAL TRIBUTE TO JOHN MEGEL—SPECIAL ADVISER U.S. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL COUNCIL

By Ian Hancock

John Megel was aware that his people had been murdered in great numbers during the Second World War. But like most other Americans, he knew little of the actual details of the Nazi atrocities against our people. He was originally drawn into Holocaust related matters through his own attempt to revive the Red Dress Romani Benevolent Association, founded almost 60 years ago by his grandfather, Steve Kasloff.

John Megel felt, like his grandfather before him, that Romani Americans were the victims of social and economic prejudice which largely resulted from public ignorance. Kasloff met with and spoke personally to President Franklin D. Roosevelt about his concerns for his people, though to little avail. As John Megel came to understand more and more the immensity of Hitler's plan to exterminate the Gypsy people, and how the world seemed to have turned its back to our plight since the war, he became consumed with an abiding outrage and a determination to see justice done. Sometimes he would speak to me with tears in his eyes wondering why no one seemed to care.

It's very largely due to his efforts that this solemn event has come about. And it's only fitting that a tribute be made to his memory here today. He was to have spoken and to have participated in our ceremony here this morning.

One of Lazo's concerns was the collection of songs and poems in Romani which have to do with the Holocaust. I recently found one such poem, composed by a Serbian shortly after the end of the war, which I'd like to read in his memory.

One morning about seven,
the Germans came to my door.
"Let's go Gypsy. Let's be on our way."
"Wait, Mr. German, until I light the fire
and kiss my old mother, for I know I won't be coming back.
I know you're going to take my life."
"Hurry, Gypsy, and take your shovel
and dig yourself a grave."



REMARKS

John Tene
President, U.S. Romani Council

I'm here today to help the Gypsies and their cause—a cause that was ignored for four decades. But it is not too late. Finally their story is coming out. However, their story must never be forgotten again. Now, it's our turn to help the public and the government

become aware of, and understand the Gypsy community.

We no longer want to be discredited as being thieves and liars. We finally are beginning to sink roots into our communities as first-class, not second-class citizens.

My decade of working with the Romany Union in Europe has given me the necessary insight to explain to the American people the fate of the Gypsy people. And there are others.

Here in America, the Gypsy story is finally being told, not by Americans, but by the Gypsies themselves, Gypsies who have been in the hands of Nazis and who lived through the genocide and Holocaust.

My Gypsy brothers in America however, need to be educated as well. They lost track of everything that happened to their brethren in Europe from the early part of this century through the war. They did not know about the Holocaust or the Gypsies who were victims of Nazi Genocide. For a decade now, I've been working to bring word to our people about the fate of Gypsies during the Nazi occupation of Europe.

Today is an historic day for Gypsies; a day when our story is officially being told and we receive the recognition we deserve. I am very pleased and very honored to be among you and thank you for all the support that you have given.

May God bring peace to the memories of the dear people, Gypsies and non-Gypsies, living and dead, who suffered in these terrible places. And let us especially raise our voice for the Jewish people, who, as a race, were marked for total extinction by the Nazis. And let us remind the world of the millions of other innocent people who suffered and perished during this time.

I would like to say that I'm very touched by everything that I've heard here today. It's very hard to say anything that has not been said, but I would just like to once again say from the bottom of my heart—and maybe you can join me—"God have mercy on all the souls that perished in the Holocaust." Let every one of us always remember that these victims were Gypsies, were Jews and others. And let us pray that it never happens again—never!

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BENEDICTION

The Rev. Dr. Franklin H. Littell
Member
U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council

Let us pray.

Oh, Lord, to whom we turn in the depths of despondent weakness, and whom we also praise in the fullness of our strength, we pray thee to turn the agony of the human soul into healing, to gather up the shattered frag-

ments of our frustrated hopes and dreams and make them whole again, to take the broken-endedness of life and bind us together again.

Oh, Lord, make us whole again as persons, and mend the world of our temporary residence and stewardship that we may learn to be citizens of the world that is to come—where all Thy creatures shall abide in brotherhood and peace. Accept our thanks for this place and time of renewal of life and time of love and sacred memories. And let us all say Amen.

COMMEMORATIVE CEREMONY



Pouring water on soil representing Nazi concentration camps where Gypsies were murdered are, from left, Herbert Heuss, Romani Rose and John Marino. William Duna is in photo at right.



Ceremony participants are, from left, John Marino, Ronnie Megel, Romani Rose, William Duna and Harry Bryer.



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United States Holocaust Memorial Council
2000 L Street NW, Suite 588
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 653-9220